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Responding to the problem of a lag between research advances in rehabilitation and their dissemination and utilization, the Task Force on Research Utilization (H.E.W., 1966), studied the gap and proposed the creation of a new kind of professional "change agent." Out of a later conference at the University of Florida came a very similar suggestion. As a result, a short term training program for the new "change agents" was established. These agents were to be installed into nine selected state divisions of vocational rehabilitation under five-year demonstration grants. The program for "change agents" not only offers promise of facilitating much needed innovation but also brings attention to the general problem of establishing new forms of interpersonal relationships into a rather stable, bureaucratically organized system. Conceptual questions raised in the area of vocational rehabilitation, regarding how to design a mainingful training experience, include: (1) definition of attitudes, skills, and understandings needed; (2) kind of model to be used to give greatest chance of success, and (3) areas of behavioral science to be used for theoretical guidance and training technique rationale. It is hoped that the training plan, if successful, will set a precedent for other states to follow. (Author/CJ)

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THE RESEARCH-PRACTICE GAP IN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION: WHAT'S BEING DONE ABOUT IT?

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Any consideration of the discrepancy between the body of knowledge generated by our nation's research establishment and that being used by client service systems must include two aspects of the problem: 1) the nature and form of the information available for dissemination and 2) the linking roles of workers in the research and client serving systems. In vocational rehabilitation, as a developing social serving system, the need for scientific knowledge is growing rapidly as new legislation, reflecting reliance upon rehabilitation philosophy for dealing with societal problems, is being translated into new programs of action. On the other hand, the rehabilitation research program also continues to grow. There are some indications that the time has arrived to study the communication flow back and forth between these two organizations so that the needs of the disabled may be met more effectively than they have in the past. This paper describes one element in the effort to bridge the research knowledge - rehabilitation services gap, namely, the plan to conduct a training project at the University of Florida for a pilot group of new employees (research utilization specialists) to be assigned a linking role in state divisions of vocational rehabilitation between research and rehabilitation counseling practice.

The need for this project was defined by two recent events. First, the National Citizens Advisory Committee on Vocational Rehabilitation in its 1968 comprehensive evaluational report, discussed rehabilitation research and stated, "We recommend the strengthening of....efforts to provide more rapid and effective translation of promising research into active service programs." Secondly, at its December 1966 conference on research dissemination and utilization, the Joint Liaison Committee of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Rehabilitation Counselor Educators heard Dr. William M. Usdane, Chief of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration Research and Demonstration Division keynote the conference with the statement that, "....the lag between research advances in rehabilitation and their dissemination and utilization needs to be reduced by whatever interventions may be possible."

The Task Force on Research Utilization

Responding to this problem, Mary Switzer, present Administrator of the Social and Rehabilitation Service, H.E.W. and her administrative colleagues

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early in 1966 established the Task Force on Research Utilization and charged it with the responsibility of studying the gap and proposing recommendations for bridging it. As a result of consistent meetings, the Task Force accomplished its evaluative responsibilities and submitted a number of recommendations. Among these, the most concrete was that a new kind of professional, modeled after the "change agent" first identified by Kurt Lewin in 1947, and adopted by the National Training Laboratory (Lippitt, 1958) he introduced into the federal-state communication system.

The 1966 Miami Conference

In December of 1966, the University of Florida co-sponsored a conference on Research Dissemination and Utilization with the Joint Liaison Committee of the federal-state program. In attendance were all state directors of vocational rehabilitation and the coordinators of vocational rehabilitation counselor training programs from the 60 odd universities sponsoring this kind of program. The event, in context with the activities of the Washington Task Force, resulted in a general awakening to the fact that, not only was vocational rehabilitation developing rapidly in terms of new services for the disabled, but that the communication gap between it and a concurrently expanding research program was blocking innovation based on systematic findings.

The Miami conference included a presentation by Dr. Everett Rogers, Professor of Communication Arts, Michigan State University, the theme of which was in essence, "Can vocational rehabilitation benefit from adoption of the linking functions of a change agent modeled after the one used quite successfully in agriculture, namely, the County Extension Agent?" Apparently, this notion and the conceptual frame which surrounds it made sense to all who heard, for the most popular recommendation made by both the administrators and the academicians was that this suggestion be acted upon. It is to be noted that the same suggestion received high priority by the Washington, H.E.W. Task Force.

The Training Project's Beginning

Last May, responding to a request from S.R.S. Commissioner Switzer, the Training Division of the new S.R.A. and the Research Utilization Branch of the Research and Demonstration Division of S.R.S. entered into negotiations with the Rehabilitation Counseling Department, College of Health Related Professions, University of Florida directed toward establishment of a short term training program for the new "change agents," who were to be installed into nine selected state divisions of vocational rehabilitation under five-year demonstration grants. The negotiations have resulted in intensive planning and on June 11 of this year, nine newly appointed state employees will be on the University of Florida campus for the first phase of an extended training experience. Three additional states have requested inclusion of new specialists funded by them.

The Extent of the Research and Service Gap

To get a view of the parameters of the research dissemination and utilization problem in social and rehabilitation services, we might examine the scope of its research generating establishment and a few identifying its service operations.

Beginning in 1954, when new legislation introduced support for vocational rehabilitation research, there has been a gradual increase in money and numbers of research projects. In 1955, 18 new projects were funded to the tune of $298,900. In 1967, the latest year for which my source had available figures, 125 new projects were funded costing $21,015,000. This is an increase of 7000% or seventy fold over twelve years. Furthermore, on July 7, 1968 Congress passed P.L. 90-391 projecting authorization of 700 millions by June 30, 1971 for the basic support program under Section 2 of the rehabilitation act.

A rundown on the kinds of research and demonstration projects being supported includes rehabilitation of the mentally retarded, the mentally ill, deaf people, those with speech and hearing problems, the blind, rehabilitation medicine and others. Many projects involve services such as counseling and evaluation, new patterns of service, experimental facilities and prosthetics and orthotics. A wide variety of organizations are involved including Regional Rehabilitation Research Centers, Research and Training Centers, independent facilities and individuals. Recent efforts have focused on the needs of the economically and culturally handicapped.

On the other side of the dichotomy -- or gap -- is the client serving system, largely vested in divisions of vocational rehabilitation operated by all states and possessions under cooperative federal-state funding. Through this program, over 200,000 disabled clients were rehabilitated last year, up approximately 9,000 over 1967. In 1967 federal appropriations distributed 225 millions to the states, who matched this on a 75-25 basis with about 79 millions. The 1968 and 1969 budget figures show considerable increases over the 1967 allocations.

And so, both the research and service to client systems are now of considerable magnitude. The need for new ideas, practices and services is great and the barriers to communication are being attacked.

The Training Project's General Mission

In this general context, the development of a training program for change agents assumes importance, not only because they offer promise of facilitating much needed innovation, but because it brings our attention to the general problem of establishing new forms of interpersonal relationships into what has become a rather stable, bureaucratically organized system. Seen from a traditional view, the training program assumes not much importance, for we start by merely training a few new employees for duty in state offices. Seen from the view that the change agent is a new breed of employee, an instigator, gadfly, risk taker, a supporter of

innovation, the venture becomes exciting and risky. Other agencies have tried it, NASA for example, and recently education. Despite intensive efforts to "spin off" civilian adaptations to space developments, I am informed that the uptake is about 10%. A rather meager response to what seems to be a rich and stimulating area (Havelock, 1968). The introduction of "change agents" into education has not been particularly successful either. (Lippitt, 1969)

How to design a meaningful training experience for a group of novice change agents has been our task. Let me identify for you some of the conceptual questions we have posed for ourselves.

1. Since our trainees will occupy positions which have no precedent, how do we define the kinds of attitudes, skills, and understandings needed?

2. In view of the failure in other societal institutions, i.e., space, health, education and to a lesser degree, agriculture, what kind of model can we use so as to give us a base line for experimentation and a chance for success?

3. What areas of behavioral science do we use for theoretical guidance and training technique rationale?

The Need for Theory and Concepts

Our survey of ongoing and developing theoretical models has covered operations research, systems analysis in organizational theory, (Carzo, et al., 1967) community mental health consultation, role theory (Sarbin, T.R. et al., 1968 and Biddle, B.J., 1966) industrial research and development, agriculture (Rogers, 1962).

What we have discovered, and there is no assurance that it is the answer, is that the field of human relations, rooted in the work of Kurt Lewin, Ronald Lippitt and others seems most practical and promising. For understanding concerning principles of dissemination and utilization, the work being carried on at the Center for Research on Utilization of Scientific Knowledge, Institute of Social Research, University of Michigan has been most helpful. The former gives us a philosophy of training which emphasizes interpersonal relationships, role development and personal sensitivity and creativity. The latter provides an understandable, conceptual description of the information flow system with which we are dealing. This approach emphasizes role theory and its applications to linkage. We have found the consultation of Drs. Ronald Lippitt and Ronald Havelock of the Institute of Social Research, University of Michigan extremely helpful while Dr. Everett Rogers, (1962) and his work on dissemination of innovations (1962) has been the helpful "gadfly" who aroused the rehabilitation establishment and helped move it toward communication arts for basic understandings.

The Research Utilization Branch, S.R.S.

I have mentioned in passing, two units within the Social and Rehabilitation Service, H.E.W., which are actively involved with the new thrust toward bridging the research-practice gap, the Training Division of the Social and Rehabilitation Administration and the Research Utilization Branch of the Research and Demonstration Division of S.R.S. To properly understand the scope of the training project described here, it is helpful to know the role of each.

The Research Utilization Branch, a product of the reorganization of H.E.W. under John Gardner, is just now beginning to gather together a variety of services and activities which will increase the use of S.R.S. research. To date, it has developed a publication for the field entitled Research Briefs, planned for issuance of two other publications, introduced new guidelines for research findings funded by S.R.S. which describe research utilization concepts, conducted research utilization conferences, (Dumas, N.S., 1968, Glaser, E., 1967, Conference at Springfield College, 1968) and developed plans for organizing the S.R.S. research literature looking forward to setting up an information retrieval system. One other activity of the R.U.B. has been the development of the nine demonstration grants which will support the employment of a pilot group of research utilization specialists into nine selected states, one in each S.R.S. region.

The actual training project is the result of negotiations and planning between the University of Florida's Rehabilitation Counseling Department and the Training Division of S.R.A., with the latter providing funds and consultation.

It is anticipated that all other states divisions of vocational rehabilitation will become interested in the results of the project and that each will consider employment of a research utilization specialist to link research with its needs for innovative practices.

As matters now stand, The Research Utilization Branch, Research and Demonstration Division, S.R.S. is now established with limited staff but great promise, while the University of Florida begins on June 11 to train, on a pilot basis, the first group of research utilization specialists.

Training People to Work in a System

The R.U.S. training design focuses on goals such as these:

1. To begin the process of role identification, legitimation and new self perceptions for the trainees and their co-workers focusing on research utilization.

2. To develop skills in team work oriented toward problem identification and solutions.

3. To develop sensitivity to and knowledge about resources useful in improving services to the disabled.

4. To develop an identity within the general research utilization system of vocational rehabilitation.

The time-space features of the program are these:

Phase I	Three days of training at the University of Florida. (June 11-14, 1969)
Phase II	Four months of action-research and need exploration in the agency.
Phase III	Four days of additional training at the University of Florida. (October 14-17, 1969)
Phase IV	Evaluation and reporting on data which deals with training results.

The training plan is a modest one, in view of the task it hopes to accomplish. We have been limited by our circumstances and the manner in which the general research utilization program within S.R.S. has developed. If we are successful in setting this new profession in rehabilitation off to a good start, other states may follow the original nine. If not, we should be able to ascertain why and where this innovation has failed. Our program evaluation study will provide us with some data on this question. We feel that information on this question can lead to increased understanding of the research utilization problem in vocational rehabilitation.

At this time next year, I hope we can report to you a number of positive effects resulting from this use of human relations and communications theory in developing what we hope will be an exemplary model of training.

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